

Tifal language

Tifal is an Ok language spoken in Papua New Guinea. Dialects are (1) Tifal (Tifalmin) and Urap (Urapmin) and (2) Atbal (Atbalmin).

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Geography

The Tifal language is bounded by Papuan and Irian Jaya speakers to the south and west, the Telefomin valley in the east, and the Sepik river to the north.^[4]

Orthography

Tifal	
Tifalmin	
Native to	Papua New Guinea
Region	Sandaun Province, Telefomin District
Ethnicity	incl. Urapmin
Native speakers	4,000 (2003) ^[1]
Language family	Trans–New Guinea <div> <div>▪ Central & South New Guinea ?</div> <div>▪ Ok</div> <div>▪ Mountain</div> <div>▪ Tifal</div> </div>
Dialects	Tifal–Urap Atbal
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	tif – inclusive code Individual code: urm – Urap
Glottolog	tifa1245 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/tifa1245) Tifal ^[2] urap1239 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/urap1239) Urapmin ^[3]

Phonemic	ɑ	ɑː	b	d	eː	f	i	iː	k	l	m	n	ŋ	o	oː	s	t	u	uː	w	j
Lowercase	a	aa	b, p	d	e	f	i	ii	k	l	m	n	ng	o	oo	s	t	u	uu	w	y
Uppercase	A	Aa	B	D	E	F	I	li	K	L	M	N		O	Oo	S	T	U	Uu	W	Y

Phonology

Consonants

Consonants

	Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar
Plosive	b	t d		k
Nasal	m	n		ŋ
Fricative	f	s		
Approximant	w		j	
Lateral		l		

/b/ is realized as [p^h] word finally, as [p] in syllable-coda position before a consonant, and [b] elsewhere.

/t/ is realized as [t] in syllable coda before a consonant and [t^h] elsewhere.

/d/ is realized as [ɾ] intervocalically, e.g. /didab/: [dɪ 'ɾʌp^h] 'water container'.

/k/ is [ɣ] intervocalically, [k] in syllable coda before consonants, and [k^h] elsewhere.

/s/ is realized as [ʃ] before /u/.

// is alveolar adjacent to back vowels and alveodental elsewhere.^[5] One dialect realizes // as [r] intervocalically.

Vowels

Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i i:		u u:
Mid	e:		o o:
Open		ɑ ɔ:	

/o/ and /o: / rarely contrast.^[6]

Vowel allophones^[7]

Phoneme	Condition	Allophone	Realization elsewhere
/i/	word-initially and finally	[i]	[ɪ]
/a/		[a]	[ʌ]
/u/		[u]	[ʊ]
/e:/	in open syllables, before /m/, and between /j/ and /p/	[e:]	[ɛ:]
/o/	before /n/ or /ŋ/; between /t/ and /k/	[ɔ]	[ɒ]

Phonotactics

Syllable structure is (C)V(:)(C). The expression *kwiin takan* 'oh my!' may be an exception.

/d/ only occurs word-initially.^[8] /f/ only occurs syllable-initially.^[9] /ŋ/ is always syllable-final.^[10]

Initial /l/ only occurs in some dialects. Initial /kw/ occurs in two dialects, and may usually be interpreted as C+V.

/w/ and /j/ occur syllable-initially.^[11] Only one dialect allows syllable-coda /j/.^[12]

Stress

In inflected words stress lies on the last syllable of the verb stem. Otherwise, if there are long vowels stress falls on the first in the word. If all vowels are short, stress falls on the last syllable if it is closed and the first syllable otherwise.

Grammar

Nouns

Nouns are not inflected but may mark possession. Body parts and kinship terms are obligatorily possessed, and some kinship terms require affixing. On other nouns possession is optional, except for proper names which are never possessed.^[13]

Pronouns

Pronoun stems^[14]

Person		Basic	Emphatic
1	s	ni-/na-	nala-/nalal-/nila
	pl	nuu-/no-	nuulu-/nulul-
2	s	m kab-	kaltab-/kalab-
		f kub-	kultub-/kulub-
	pl	kib-	kiltib-
3	s	m a-	ala-/alal-/al-
		f u-	ulu-/ulul-/ul-
	pl	ib-/i-	iltib-/ilib-/ilal-/il-

Non-emphatic pronouns^[15]

Suffix meaning:	Poss.	Subj.	Definitive	Inst.	First	with, and, also
Suffix:	-mi~ni	-i~di	-yo	ta	-siik/-siin	soo/soono

Emphatic pronouns^[16]

Suffix meaning:	Poss.	Inst.	'only'	'like, simile'
Suffix:	-mi~ni	ta	-kal	tab

Verbs

Tifal has a rich aspectual system.^[17] Verbs may be separated into four groups based on how they transform from continuative to punctiliar aspect. Some only have vowel and/or simple stem changes, some have suppletive stems, some change compound-final stems, and some which have allomorphs which add -(a)laa-min (or rarely -daa-laa-min) to the stem.^[18]

Verbs also can be divided based on transitivity. Some require direct objects, some with optional objects, some with optional locational objects, and a few intransitive verbs.^[19]

Order of verb suffixes^[20]

verb	<u>ben.</u>	ben.	-laa	tense	person	mood	statement-final marker
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Tense and aspect

Most final verbs mark tense, mood, and person, but most verbs can mark aspect and not tense and still be a final verb.^[21]

Tense-aspect suffixes^[22]

	Continuative	Punctiliar
pres	-b/m ¹	-d
yesterday past	¹ -m-som/-a-som	-b
dist. past	-a-s	
very remote past	-bis	-s
abilitative	¹ -m-am	¹ -d-am
near future	¹ -m-okom	¹ -d-okom
dist. future	¹ -m-okob	¹ -d-okob

1. "initial consonant of the customary or class changing marker is retained"

Tifal sentences are contain inflected verb-root-chains, often with a final fully conjugated verb. One must inflect for the amount of time between one verb in the chain and the next.^[23]

Deixis

Marking spatial relation between verbs and their objects is obligatory. "up" must be clarified as either "upslope" or "upstream", "down" as "downslope" or "downstream", and "across" as "across land" or "across a river".^[24]

Kinship

Tifal has dyadic kinship terms (terms referring to the relationship two or more people have to each other), which are present in less than 10 languages and not prevalent in Papua New Guinea. However, they are a salient feature of the Ok languages. Related terms are found in Oksapmin, Mian, and Telefol.^[25]

See also

- [Urapmin language](#)

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Further reading

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External links

- PNG Language Resources: Tifal (http://www.sil.org/pacific/png/show_pubs.asp?pubs=biblio&code=tif)
 - WALS - Tifal (http://wals.info/languoid/lect/wals_code_tif)
 - Tifal on globalrecordings.net (<http://globalrecordings.net/language/3052>)
 - Missionary video in Tifal (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QaYMBa-PWQo>)
 - Tifal Grammar Essentials (http://www-01.sil.org/pacific/png/pubs/928474531256/Tifal_gram_esent.pdf)
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